

“BAPTISM DOTH SAVE.”

A LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF EXETER.

BY

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“BAPTISM DOTH ALSO NOW SAVE US.”—1 Pet. iii. 21.

SECOND EDITION.

LIVERPOOL:
DEIGHTON AND LAUGHTON.
LONDON:
THOMAS HATCHARD, PICCADILLY.
1851.

PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

THE first edition of this Tract has disappeared in a few days. The importance of the subject cannot indeed be exaggerated. The Baptismal controversy has long agitated the Christian Church; and writers on all sides have acquired a habit of taking much for granted, that cannot be proved; and starting in the discussion from a point where human traditions and glosses have already obscured the Divine word.

The Author of these few pages is deeply impressed with the conviction, that a recurrence to the fountain head for a definition of terms, whatever reception it may meet with in some quarters, will have the effect of relieving many minds from much embarrassment; by placing before them the scriptural uses of the word "baptism," and the scriptural ordinance of baptism in water, freed from the unscriptural phraseology of the schools.

It would be gratifying, and might be profitable, if some of those writers, with whom the word "sacramental" is in such frequent and convenient use, would have the kindness to define the meaning they attach to it, and to point out on what "warranty of holy Scripture" they ground that meaning.

It is sufficiently intelligible to say, that the pledge on oath, (*sacramentum*,) which the soldiers of the Roman Empire

gave for their fidelity to the Imperial Standard, came to be applied, in a way of analogous accommodation, to the Lord's Supper; wherein the early Christians, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, pledged themselves with all solemnity to be "faithful unto death," in His service. But this account of the word is, by no means, sufficient to bear the weight of the complicated structure of ecclesiastical formalism which has been erected upon it.

To ascertain how the Latin word *sacramentum*, instead of continuing to signify *an oath*, as in latin writers it does; began, in Christian writers, to signify "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," would be an investigation, which, if it did not edify the devout, would at least gratify the curious.

Holy Scripture is altogether silent upon the subject.

LETTER

TO THE LORD BISHOP OF EXETER.

MY LORD,

The eyes of the church are upon you. Some are looking with hope, but without any clearly defined idea of what they are hoping for. Some are looking in anger, deeming your Lordship a needless and reckless disturber of our peace. Some are looking in sorrow, grieved that the amount of inconsistency with itself, which belongs to our ecclesiastical system, should afford an opportunity, and supply even an appearance of excuse, for such vexatious and agitating proceedings as your Lordship sees it right to persevere in.

I am one of these. I can entertain no hope of good from your course. I feel no anger, because I am persuaded you are conscientious in what you are doing. But I am grieved, in common I believe with all real lovers of peace and unity in the church, I am deeply and sincerely grieved, that your Lordship should have repudiated with so high a hand that forbearance, which our unfinished and in some degree inconsistent system of ecclesiastical polity and doctrine demanded on either side.

Your Lordship could not be more exclusive and dictatorial, if the whole volume of our Book of Common

Prayer, in the natural sense of it, were an undeniable echo of your Lordship's private judgment: whereas, what is the fact?

Your Lordship is respectfully but earnestly invited to consider what, as a matter of fact, is the present state of the case among us.

1. The Prayer Book, considered as a whole, is in some degree inconsistent with itself: so that readers of the most discordant sentiments on some subjects, each seizing on what accords with himself, claim it as their own on both sides.

Let it be acknowledged, as in fairness and candour it ought to be, that in the simplest, most obvious, and most natural sense of our language, each side has some claim upon it. To instance in your Lordship's favourite topic, one who holds baptismal regeneration can quote from the Prayer Book that baptism is regeneration: another who rejects the opinion, can quote from the Prayer Book, that baptism is a sign of regeneration. One can quote concerning all baptised persons that they are thereby made the children of grace. Another can quote, that in those *only* who *worthily receive* baptism it has a wholesome effect or operation.

This is not an opinion. It is matter of fact. And as such what does it demand before we go further? Surely, my Lord, it demands either an alteration which shall deprive one party of their quotations; or forbearance from both parties. If your object be alteration, why not avow it? It is a legitimate object. Our system ought not to be inconsistent with itself. But you have not avowed it. Your Lordship aims at what would be tantamount to an alteration, and what would practically

work as an alteration, while you profess to desire no alteration. Is this candid?

2. But secondly, and with reference to proportions on either side, the great bulk of the Prayer Book, all of it, indeed, except three or four sentences, is clearly and powerfully on the side of your Metropolitan's private judgment. Three or four sentences of it are as clearly on the side of your Lordship's private judgment. To make the Prayer Book harmonise with your Metropolitan, and consistent with itself, the erasure of three or four sentences would be abundantly sufficient.

To make it harmonise with your Lordship, and consistent with itself, it should be all re-written, except three or four sentences.

For example. The Archbishop, and those who agree with His Grace, find their views admirably expressed in the natural sense of the Thirty-nine Articles, and would not, if they might, make the least alteration: while the natural sense of the Thirty-nine Articles absolutely demolishes all the peculiarities of your Lordship's scheme. Mr. Newman, when writing his celebrated Tract XC., found it impossible to reconcile his views of sacramental grace with the natural sense of the Thirty-nine Articles. He frankly avowed a *non-natural* sense. He has since made progress; but his views *then* appear to have been very identical with your Lordship's views now.

"ONE BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS!" This is the Article of the faith for which your Lordship is so deeply concerned. Of their adherence to this, you invite from the Clergy of your Diocese a fresh avowal. It may not be uninteresting to your Lordship to know what some of the Clergy, and Laity, in other parts of the

kingdom, think upon this subject ; and a public address to your Lordship, under existing circumstances, can scarcely be deemed intrusive, in any member of the church.

I must premise that taking our sixth Article literally and naturally, I believe that “whatsoever is not read in Holy Scripture, or may be proved *thereby*,” without the aid of any human authority, “is not to be required of any man to be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”

Although the sacred writers have not said so much on the subject of Baptism, commonly so called, as certain controversialists, in all ages, have been disposed to do ; yet they have said something, and it is obviously our first duty in this matter carefully to examine what they have said, praying for and expecting the teaching of God the Holy Ghost, by whom alone, in this and in every thing connected with our Lord Jesus Christ, we can be guided into saving truth.

Putting the subject catechetically, to begin with, I may ask, What mean we by this word Baptism ? This may seem a strangely elementary question in a letter to your Lordship ; but “it is worth observing,” says Archbishop Whately, in his instructive Treatise on Logic, “that the words whose ambiguity is the most frequently overlooked, and is productive of the greatest amount of confusion of thought and fallacy, are among the *commonest*, and are those of whose meaning the generality consider there is the least room to doubt. It is, indeed, from those very circumstances that the danger arises : words in very common use are both the most liable, from the looseness of ordinary discourse, to slide from one sense into another, and also the least likely to have that

ambiguity suspected. *Familiar acquaintance* is perpetually mistaken for *accurate knowledge*.*

On the importance of defining words in common use, the same acute writer remarks—

“It is important to observe, that the very circumstance which in any case makes a definition the more necessary, is apt to lead to the omission of it; for when any terms are employed that are *not* familiarly introduced into ordinary discourse, such as “parallelogram,” or “sphere,” or “tangent,”—“pencil of rays,” or “refraction,”—oxygen, or alkali,—the learner is ready to inquire, and the writer to anticipate the inquiry, what is meant by this or that term? And although, in such cases, it is undoubtedly a correct procedure to answer this inquiry by a definition, yet of the two cases a definition is even more necessary in the other, where it is not so likely to be called for;—where the word, not being new to the student, but familiar to his ear, from its employment in every day discourse, is liable to the ambiguity which is almost always the result. For in respect of words that sound “something new and strange,” though it is, as I have said, much better to define them in the outset, yet even without this, the student would gradually collect their meaning pretty correctly, as he proceeded in his study of any treatise, from having nothing to mislead him—nothing from which to form his notions at all, except the manner in which the terms were employed in the work itself that is before him. And the very desire he had felt of a definition would lead him in this way to form one, and generally a sufficiently correct one, for himself.”

* Whately's *Logic*, p. 346—Edit. vii.

“It is otherwise with terms to which we are familiarly accustomed. Of these, the student does not usually crave definitions, from supposing, for that reason, that he understands them well enough: though, perhaps, (without suspecting it) he has in reality been accustomed to hear them employed in various senses, and to attach but a vague and inaccurate notion to them. If you speak to an uninstructed hearer of any thing that is *spherical*, or *circular*, or *cylindrical*, he will probably beg for an explanation of your meaning; but if you tell him of any thing that is *round*, it will not strike him that any explanation is needed: though he has been accustomed to employ the word, indiscriminately, in *all* the senses denoted by the other three.”*

Convinced as I am that a serious fallacy has arisen, not from the indiscriminate, but from the limited, use of the word baptism by ecclesiastical writers, I revert to the question, what mean we by this word? The right answer, in the first place, if we would avoid ambiguity, is this—The meaning of the word depends upon the context wherein it is found: for, in Holy Scripture, the word baptism does not, in every passage where it occurs, mean the same thing. What, then, are its various scriptural meanings?

i. Baptism signifies acute sufferings. So our Lord himself uses the word, to express his own sufferings and also the sufferings of his disciples.

His own sufferings—“I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?”

* Ibid—pp. 214, 215.

“ But I have a *baptism* to be *baptised* with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished? ”*

I have a suffering to suffer, and how am I pressed and anxious and uneasy, *pained* is our marginal translation, (πῶς συνεχομαι) until it is accomplished! Here, then, it is not to be denied that *baptism* is used in a figurative or metaphorical sense, to signify suffering, and especially that suffering which was peculiar to our Lord himself.

In a similar way he uses the word to express those sufferings of his, of which his disciples were to be partakers. “ Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be *baptised* with the *baptism* that I am baptised with? And they say unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptised withal, shall ye be baptised — ” †

Can you, as witnesses for God, suffer patiently from an evil world as I do? We can. Ye shall indeed so suffer. Ye are not of the world, as I am not of the world. If they call the Master of the house Beelzebub, they will equally miscall those of his household who are true to him. If they persecute me, they will also persecute you. If they give me a cup of bitterness to drink, and baptise me in blood, you may prepare yourselves for similar treatment at their hands. Here again it is so clear, that nothing can be clearer, that *baptism* is used to signify *suffering*.

ii. Secondly. Baptism signifies endowment with the miraculous powers of the Holy Ghost.

* St. Luke xii. 49, 50.

† St. Mark x. 38, 39.

In this sense John the Baptist used it, when speaking of what Christ would confer on his disciples.

“He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : He shall *baptise* you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.”*

In the same sense our Lord used the word, when he spoke to his disciples, after his resurrection from the dead. “Wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me : for John truly baptised with water ; but ye shall be *baptised* with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence.”†

And so it is applied by St. Peter, when giving an account of what occurred in the house of Cornelius the Roman Centurion. “As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, *as on us* at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptised with water ; but ye shall be *baptised with the Holy Ghost*.”‡

iii. Thirdly. Baptism signifies what by some is called conversion, by some regeneration, what our Lord calls being born of the Spirit, what St. Paul calls a new creation. It is that inward and spiritual change by the secret energy of the Holy Spirit, whereby a sinner is renewed in the spirit of his mind, united spiritually with Jesus Christ by faith, in his death, and in his resurrection ; dead with Christ, buried with Christ, risen again with Christ, pardoned in Christ, clothed with Christ, a new creation in Christ.

Thus St. Paul writes to the Romans—

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were *baptised*

* St. Matt. iii. 2.

† Acts i. 5.

‡ Acts xi. 15, 16.

into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that, like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”*

The meaning of this passage will not be altered by substituting for baptism, conversion, or regeneration, or renewal. Know ye not, that so many of us as were renewed into Christ, were renewed into his death. Therefore we are buried with him, by renewal, (or conversion, or regeneration) into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even we also should walk in newness of life, being converted or regenerated. On the fifth verse we may remark, that whatever baptism in this passage means, it is inseparable, according to St. Paul, from salvation. If we have it, or, as the Apostle himself here paraphrases what he had said, if we have been *planted together* (another figurative mode of saying the same thing) in the likeness of Christ's death (by baptism into Him), *we shall be also* in the likeness of his resurrection—*i.e.*, we shall have glory, body and soul, or finished salvation in the image of Him.

Similar is Saint Paul's use of the word baptism, in his epistle to the Colossians.

“Ye are complete in Him who is the head of all principality and power; in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:

* Rom. vi. 3-5.

buried with him in *baptism*, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.”*

Here the spiritual conversion, or regeneration, or *quickenings* of the Colossian believers, is expressed figuratively by both circumcision and baptism; a circumcision made without hands, a baptism rendered effectual through the faith of the operation of God.

This spiritual change is variously expressed in Holy Scripture. One mode of expressing it, adopted by St. Peter, as a description of Baptism in this sense, is “the answer of a good conscience towards God.” With this definition of his meaning, and thus guarding as far as plain words can guard against being misunderstood, the Apostle did not scruple to say, that *Baptism saves us*.

The passage is in the third chapter of his first epistle. He was writing concerning Christian suffering. It is hard to suffer unjustly; but much harder to *deserve* to suffer. It is better to suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing. This he argued by reference to the example of Christ. He suffered for well-doing, in man’s treatment of him. He suffered for righteousness’ sake. In this sense, we must suffer with Him, and so the Apostle pursues the subject in the following chapter, exhorting the brethren to arm themselves with the same mind that was in Christ.

But Christ suffered *also* as a sacrifice, the Just One for, or instead of, the unjust ones, to bring us to God: being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the

* Col. ii. 10—13.

Eternal Spirit ; by which Spirit he preached the Gospel in his Apostles. And not in them first. He had always been so preaching by his Spirit in his faithful servants. He did so in Noah to the Antediluvians who were lost, and are now in the prison of eternal death. They were unpersuaded by his preaching, during their life time, in the days of Noah. He waited long for them, even an hundred and twenty years. (Gen. vi. 3.)

Two wonders characterised the old world—the long-suffering of God, and the continued ungodliness of man. The same now. The issue *then* was, that a small family were saved in the Ark, by water bearing them up. That was a type or figure.

Now, a small family, a “little flock,” (for “the way of life is narrow, and few there be who find it”)* are saved by the antitype, or like figure of the Ark, that is *baptism*, the resurrection of Jesus Christ bearing them up.

Thus it appears that baptism does save. Undoubtedly what the Apostle here means by baptism does save ; and he is very explicit as to his meaning, both negatively and positively, both as to what he did not mean and what he did mean. For no sooner had he written that baptism does save us, than he added, “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.”

Conscience is God’s witness in man. The answer of a good conscience toward God is an inward testimony of sincerity in the sight of Him unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid. This St. Paul gives as the genuine characteristic of truly

* Matthew vii. 13, 14.

Christian, *i. e.*, of converted or regenerated, or (in this sense) baptised, persons. He says, “ Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world.”*

“ The purified condition of the whole soul may well, as here it doth, go under the name of the good conscience, it being so prime a faculty of it, and as the glass of the whole soul, wherein the state of it is represented. Therefore, Heb. ix. 14, the efficacy of the blood of Christ is expressed thus, that it ‘ purifieth our consciences from dead works ;’ which expression is the same thing in effect with that here, ‘ the answer of a good conscience unto God.’

“ The answer (ἐπερώτημα), the asking or questioning of conscience, which comprises likewise its answer ; for the word intends the whole correspondence of the conscience with God, and with itself as towards God, or in the sight of God. And indeed, God’s questioning it, is by itself ; it is His deputy in the soul. He makes it pose itself, for him, and before him, concerning its own condition ; and so the answer it gives itself in that posture, He as it were sitting and hearing it in his presence, is an answer made unto him. This questioning and answering, (if such a thing were at this time, as it certainly was soon after,) yet means not the questions and answers used in the baptism of persons who, being of years, professed their faith in answering the questions moved ; it possibly alludes unto that ; but it further, by way of resemblance, expresses the inward questioning and answering which is transacted within, betwixt the soul and itself, and the soul and God,

* 2 Cor. i. 12.

and so is allusively called *επερωτημα*, ‘a questioning and answering,’ but it is distinctively specified, *εις Θεον*; whereas the other was towards men, this is unto God.”*

Such is the Apostle’s definition of saving baptism: and that, be it observed, in avowed contradistinction from “the putting away of the filth of the flesh.” Baptism doth save—*i. e.*, the answer of a good conscience toward God,—to wit, the renewal of the inward man, in its examination of itself, in the sight of God.

iv. Fourthly. Baptism signifies an outward and visible ordinance of revealed religion, in which, by divine commandment, *water* is applied to the human body.

Thus it is used to describe the ministry of John the Baptist. “I indeed baptise with *water*.” And again, “John was baptising in Enon, near to Salim, because there was much *water* there: and they came and were baptised.”

So also it is used to describe this part of the ministry of the Apostles, and their fellow labourers in the Gospel. “As they went on their way they came to a certain *water*, and the eunuch said, See, here is water, what doeth hinder me to be baptised? And Philip said, If thou believeth with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went both down into the *water*, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptised him.”†

In like manner in the case of Cornelius and his house. “While Peter yet spake to them, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they

* Archbishop Leighton in loco.

† Acts viii. 36—38.

of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost; for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God."

We have already seen how St. Peter called this their *baptism* in the sense of miraculous endowment. But now in another sense. "Peter answered, Can any man forbid *water* that these should not be *baptised*, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptised in the name of the Lord."

This was the ordinance which the Lord instituted when He said, "Go ye therefore and *make disciples* of all nations, *baptising* them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

The washing of water serving in nature for the cleansing away of the filth of the flesh, this ordinance was, in its outward act, *significant* of an inward and spiritual cleansing, though altogether *distinct* from it. Distinct from it, for Jesus was baptised with water, and in his case, no inward and spiritual cleansing or forgiveness was, or could have been, required. Distinct from it—because when St. Peter says that Baptism saves, he expressly denies that he says so of the outward ordinance—"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,"—and as expressly affirms that he says so of the inward change—"the answer of a good conscience towards God."

It was the Lord's will to establish a visible society upon earth, as well as to save a spiritual Church. To this end, a visible ordinance of separation between his society and all the rest of mankind was indispensable.

Baptism in water is such an ordinance ; and as such, was, and still is, a test of discipleship. It is, as might be expected, a most appropriate test. Its outward act is significant of that inward washing which makes a *real* disciple. Therefore we truly say of it, " Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened." It is that, but not that *only*, " it is *also* a sign of Regeneration or new birth.*

Appearing in itself to be useless, and resting on no moral claim in the nature of things for our adoption, the dutiful use of it proclaims submission to the supremacy of Him on whose *authority* it rests as its *ultima ratio*. And thus, the willing and intelligent baptism in water of an instructed adult, was a practical proof, as well as a significant sign, of his inward submission to God. It certified him to the church around, as a man whom God had graciously baptised into Christ, and whose sins were washed away in the blood of Christ. And therefore, in such a case, as his sins were washed away in the sight of God by baptism in one sense, he might very appropriately be said to wash them away in the sight of the church by baptism in the other sense.

Of this, the most notable case is that of Saul of Tarsus. He was a zealous Jew. He did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was risen from the dead. When the Apostles preached " Jesus and the resurrection," he opposed and persecuted them. The whole question turned upon this point, Is Jesus risen ? When Saul, on the way to Damascus, saw and heard Jesus alive, the whole question was settled in his mind. His whole intelligent and

* Art. xxvii.

moral nature was penetrated with conviction. The Apostles were right. He had been fearfully wrong up to that moment. “Lord,” he exclaimed, “what wilt Thou have me to do?”* He was a changed man,—a praying man. He was baptised into Christ’s death, buried with Christ by baptism into death, and risen with Christ through the faith of the operation of God, who had raised him from the dead. So far as his own salvation was concerned, had he died that moment, he would have been saved.

But he was a chosen vessel of God to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel. To this end, he must be accredited to the church around him, have their confidence, and work with and by means of them. It became, therefore, indispensable that he should not only be washed from his sins in the sight of God, by the baptism made without hands; but also in the sight of the Church, by the baptism made with hands. Hence the exhortation of Ananias to him—“Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”† The God of our fathers hath chosen thee. You are his: avow yourself such without delay. You are his soldier, secretly but really enlisted: enrol yourself in the ranks openly according to his general orders. You are a pardoned sinner before God: proclaim it before all men.

Thus, we perceive the value, and even the great necessity, of this baptism in water, “where it may be had.”‡ When it cannot be had, the man baptised in a deeper sense must go on without it; but *where it may be had*, as it is the man’s duty not only to serve Christ in the spirit, but also to confess Him before

* Acts ix. 6.

† Acts xxii. 16.

‡ Office for Baptism of Adults.

men in the flesh ; he is bound to adopt that mode of making his confession, which the Lord himself has appointed.

The same line of argument applies to the Lord's Supper, wherein, as often as we eat the bread and drink of the cup which the Lord has commanded to be received, "we do *shew* the Lord's death until He come." We proclaim to others what is already a truth concerning ourselves. His death is our life—His coming again is our hope.

It is easy to call this heresy, and say it does not agree with the Church : but it is not so easy to prove it to be heresy, by shewing that it does not agree with the Scriptures.

Here there are **FOUR** distinct Scriptural meanings of the word *baptism*.

1. Suffering.
2. Endowment with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost.
3. Conversion, or regeneration, or renewal of soul ; or, as St. Peter calls it, "the answer of a good conscience toward God." In none of these is there any mention of water.
4. An application of water to the body, in the name of the Lord, and in obedience to the commandment of the Lord ; or, as St. Peter calls it, "the putting away of the filth of the flesh."

It is much to be regretted, that ecclesiastical writers have not continued to use the word baptism in all these senses, after the example of the inspired writers. Had

they done so, the meaning of the word must in every case have been sought for in the context where it stood; because in itself it might have any one of four meanings. Of course, when the same word is used in so many senses, there is a liability to confusion; but the proper way to avoid such confusion is the Scriptural way, by distinction and discrimination.

The Apostle Peter hath shown us the way. He says *Baptism doth save us*. But in so saying, what does he mean by baptism? He tells us. As if he had prophetically anticipated a mistake which would afterwards arise, and entered his protest against it, he said—"not the putting away of the filth of the flesh," not the outward ordinance, not baptism in that meaning of the word. Baptism, so understood, does not save. What I mean is, "the answer of a good conscience toward God," the inward change. Baptism, so understood, does save. Thus, according to the different meanings attached to the word, these two sayings are both true, and both equally true—baptism does save, and baptism does not save.

But your Lordship says that the outward ordinance and the inward regeneration are inseparable.

Of this opinion, the distinction here made by St. Peter seems to supply an unanswerable refutation. If the two things were inseparable, why make the distinction at all? If inseparable, where the one is the other must be, and thus the distinction made by the Apostle would be utterly meaningless. But if the one may be where the other is not, and if the one gives salvation and the other does not, then the distinction is of vital moment, worthy the Apostle's pen, and entitled to our most serious consideration.

Scriptural facts corroborate this argument.

Baptism saved the dying thief on the cross: not the outward ordinance, he had it not; but the inward change. He was baptised into Jesus Christ, and put on Christ, and had the remission of his sins, and the regeneration of his heart; and *this* baptism saved him, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Baptism did not save Judas Iscariot, *i. e.*, the outward ordinance, which he had. He had no more, and *this* baptism does not save.

Saint Paul was the chief instrument which it pleased God to make use of, to convey to the Corinthian Christians the baptism which saves. "Though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ," said the Apostle to them, "yet have ye not many fathers: for *in Christ Jesus* I have *begotten* you through the gospel."* He had baptised them into Christ, with the baptism made without hands, the one baptism for the remission of sins. This he had done *through the gospel*.

But with respect to the baptism made with hands, the ordinance in water, the Apostle says to the same persons, "I thank God I baptised none of you, but Crispus and Gaius." . . . "For Christ sent me not to baptise, but to preach the gospel."†

Instead of following the scriptural example, and using the word baptism in different senses, ascribing to each its proper meaning; the common practice has been to call every meaning of the word baptism, except one, by some other name or description, to confine the use of the word baptism to one only of its meanings, viz., the outward ordinance in water, and then to contend about what is, and what is not, inseparable from that ordinance.

This is an anti-scriptural practice, and has involved

* 1 Cor. iv. 15.

† Ibid. i. 14—17.

many in anti-scriptural consequences. To some persons, it is true, no evil consequences have resulted, because, although not using the word as St. Peter did, they have still made the same substantial distinction that he made between the two meanings of it, as applied to the outward ordinance and the inward change, ascribing to each what he ascribes to them.

But as regards others, a serious evil has arisen. They have found the word baptism habitually applied to the outward ordinance, and to nothing else, by writers on all sides. Then, they have found certain spiritual effects ascribed to baptism in Holy Scripture. The natural result was, that they should conclude that those spiritual effects were in some way inseparably connected with the outward ordinance.

They have done so. And hence their doctrine of regeneration by the outward ordinance, and remission of sins by the outward ordinance. To be scripturally consistent, they should have added *salvation* by the outward ordinance. For “Baptism doth *save*.”

This last was too grossly against evidence to be maintained. Hence their fiction of a regeneration and a remission of sins, which do not lead to salvation; and of new born children of God, having a temporary life and perishing after all, concerning whom our Lord and Saviour says, “I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”*

To some persons this is no difficulty; because, although the Scripture hath spoken, and the Church hath spoken,† and that with no uncertain sound, they do not, and will not, believe the *certainty* of salvation in the regenerate. They will not be persuaded with the Apostle, that where God hath begun a good work in any man, He will perform it, or finish it (ἐπιτελέσει), until the day of Jesus Christ.‡

* St. John x. 27—30.

† Art. xviii.

‡ Phil. i. 6.

To others it *is* a difficulty, and to escape from it, an attempt has been made to limit the meaning of the word regeneration, confining it to an ecclesiastical change of position and privilege, or to some supposed, but undefined and inexplicable, germ of grace, which may or may not bud and bear fruit; that is, which may or may not prove to be grace at all. A more successful attempt would be that which aimed at enlarging the application of the word baptism; calling both the inward change and the outward ordinance by that name, as the Scripture does; boldly declaring with the Apostle that baptism doth save us, and faithfully distinguishing with the Apostle between the baptism which does save, and the baptism which does not save.

When, therefore, the question is put, Does the church hold, and do you hold, that all baptised persons are regenerate? The answer ought to be—*That* depends upon the meaning of baptised in the question. If the word be used in *one* of its scriptural senses; if it be used as St. Paul used it in Romans vi. and in Colossians ii.; then, certainly, *yes*—all persons so baptised are regenerate, in its plain grammatical sense, *i. e.*, born again: all such persons are grafted into Jesus Christ, and have redemption by his blood, even the forgiveness of their sins, and the salvation of their souls. We acknowledge this ONE BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS!

This is the saving privilege of Christ's true church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, even of that whole family of which the Scripture so copiously, and the church so concisely and comprehensively declares, that "God hath chosen them in Christ, out of mankind, to bring them

by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.”* This is a precious portion of the “Catholic Truth” entrusted to the church’s keeping. We do well to be zealous for this fundamental Article of the faith,
ONE BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.

But if the word be used in another of its scriptural senses; if it be used to signify endowment with the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, as in Acts i. 5; or if it be used to signify the outward ordinance in water, as in Acts viii. 13; then the answer to the question is, we cannot say positively whether all persons so baptised are regenerate or not. If they have *only* the baptism intended in the question, they are not: but they *may* have, in addition to that, the baptism that saves, and therefore although we can pronounce upon things, discriminating between them, we cannot so pronounce upon persons, since they may, or may not, be persons who combine in themselves very different things.

The persons of whom our Lord speaks in St. Matt. vii. 22, 23, were baptised, and wrought miracles, and yet Jesus will say to them, I never knew you. Simon Magus was baptised, and remained without any change, in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity.*

Your Lordship not only refuses to hold this interpretation of the one baptism for the remission of sins, but you refuse also to allow others to hold it. Permit me to enquire, upon what ground? If your Lordship has a right to put your own interpretation on the words of the creed, other persons have the same and equal right to put theirs. Upon what principle is it supposed, that the Church speaks more plainly and unequivocally than the

* Art. xvii.

+ Acts viii. 12—23.

Apostles ? And if men put different interpretations upon any thing and every thing spoken by the Apostles, how can it be reasonably expected that they will not do likewise with any thing and every thing spoken by the Church ?

For wise purposes of moral discipline, it has pleased God to leave us, during the present dispensation, without any infallible tribunal. The liberty of judgment consequent upon such a state of things is, like every other privilege, attended with responsibility and difficulty and danger. All these must be encountered with the best measure of wisdom and discrimination, of moderation and forbearance, that we can bring to the sacred cause. Still difficulties must and will remain. They are inseparable from liberty. They are tests of discretion. They are snares to the rash. Rome has relieved herself from much of this embarrassment, by investing a sinful man with an imaginary infallibility, and making it a religious duty to submit to the idol. This is to fly the difficulties of liberty by a voluntary entering into bondage. We cannot so escape. Contend we must ; and if rash men aggravate the contention, we must endure it as best we may, endeavouring to prove ourselves “ good soldiers of Jesus Christ.”

I have said nothing about the baptism of infants ; because, except in the way of inference and analogy, the word of God says nothing about it : and where it has pleased God not to be explicit, it becomes both churches and individuals to be modest.

But your Lordship will say, The Church has spoken, and very plainly ; and her Ministers are bound to maintain her deposit of truth.

I have the happiness to agree with you in this, and to be fully persuaded that “ the baptism of young

children is in any wise to be retained in the church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.” * There is a modesty about this declaration which seems to me very instructive. Concerning other declarations of the church upon this subject, which are not so modest, differences must exist so long as we have liberty, and must be permitted to exist if we are to have peace.

And not on this subject only. In the hope of suggesting at least to your Lordship’s mind the value of a judicious forbearance, permit me to ask, respectfully but faithfully—

Does the church hold, and do you hold, that “before the foundations of the world were laid, God hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom He hath chosen in Christ out of mankind”? †

Does the church hold, and do you hold, that God hath constantly decreed “to bring such persons by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour”? †

Does the church hold, and do you hold, that “they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God’s purpose, by his Spirit working in due season”? ||

Does the church hold, and do you hold, that “they through grace obey the calling”?

Does the church hold, and do you hold, that “they be justified freely? that they be made the sons of God by adoption? that they be made like the image of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ? that they walk religiously in good works? and that at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity!” §

* Art. xxvii.

† Art. xvii.

† Ibid.

|| Ibid.

§ Ibid.

Suppose your Lordship a candidate for ordination : and suppose the Bishop to put these questions in the *ipsissima verba* of the Article, and to insist upon answers affirming the Calvinistic, *i.e.*, the natural and grammatical, interpretation of the Article ; would you not feel yourself aggrieved ? Would you not protest with eloquent indignation against the unfairness of such an exercise of private judgment ? Would you not argue, and most conclusively, that such a course, pursued by all the Bishops in England, would issue in as many Churches as there are dioceses in the kingdom ? And would you not quote with crushing power against the innovation, the language of the Royal Declaration prefixed to our Articles,—“ We will that no man hereafter shall either print or preach to draw the Article aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof ; and shall not put his *own sense or comment* to be the meaning of the Article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense ” ?

The truth is, my Lord, that you are wielding with dangerous dexterity a sword which has at least two edges ; and it does not seem too much to say, that after the agitation which, in defiance of the Church’s highest Court of Appeal, has been urged forward by your Lordship, that sword will never again be sheathed ; nor the armistice under which Churchmen in England have lived in peace ever be restored. But the agitation must go on, until some revision of our Book of Common Prayer shall be forced upon the Church as established in this realm, and one or other of the contending parties be driven from her pale.

The Judicial Committee of her Majesty’s Privy Council, by and with the advice of the two Archbishops, have

done their utmost to perpetuate among us that mutual forbearance without which it is manifest to every moderate man, we cannot proceed in peace. Your Lordship appears to be doing your utmost to banish such forbearance, as unfaithfulness, to identify "your own sense and comment" with catholic truth, and at all risks of division and disruption to propagate your own private interpretation of our church's language, to the excommunication of all who cannot, or will not agree with you.

I believe, my Lord, that instead of remaining patiently and quietly on the defensive against such an agitation carried on from such a vantage ground, it will soon become the duty of all sound churchmen to raise a counter agitation; and, if a change must take place in our comprehensive polity, to have it effected avowedly and above board, by authority, in the words of the Prayer Book; and not indirectly, by the one sided practical operation of an unscrupulous private judgment.

The issue of such a struggle is not, I think, to be dreaded, however painful the process. Much that for a season was little more in the ears of our great community than the unintelligible jargon of a middle and dark age, has of late acquired a definite meaning. The defections from our clergy and aristocracy to the ranks of the ever aggressive and intolerant Papacy, have made manifest the Rome-ward tendencies, to say no more, of the "Sacramental system," and awakened the serious apprehensions of good men, both among clergy and laity. To my eye the prospect brightens; and it is more than possible we may have to thank your Lordship as the instrument, however undesignedly, of helping forward a reformation in that church,

which, though vastly superior to any thing else of the kind in Christendom, is not yet so absolutely faultless as to be incapable of improvement.

I have the honor to be,

My Lord,

Faithfully your's,

HUGH M'NEILE.

LIVERPOOL, June 25th, 1851.

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